

COAL CREEK: A SHORT SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE FERNIE REGION.

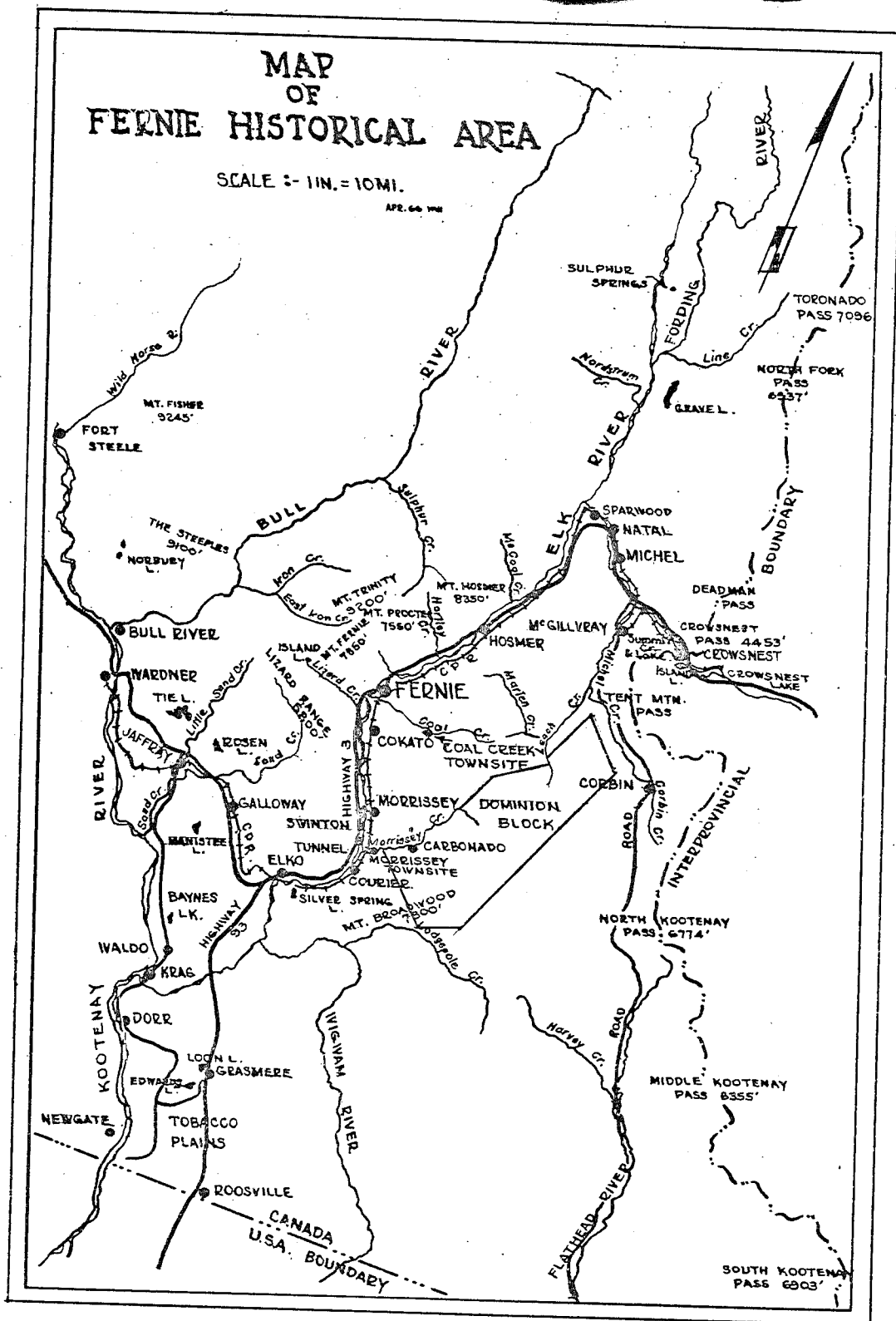
Dawne White.

Arts I
Selkirk College
1973

MAP OF FERNIE HISTORICAL AREA

SCALE :- 1 IN. = 10 MI.

APR. 66 1966



"In The Beginning"

Michael Phillips, one-time Hudson's Bay Company trader at Tobacco Plains, arrived in southeastern B.C. just as the placer-mining camps were opening in 1864. While he was employed by the Company, he spent many of his "off-seasons" exploring the adjacent valleys, and after leaving "the service" in 1869, he remained in the area. While he was not needed at work, he trapped, prospected and occasionally, worked for the Provincial Govt. When the Reservation system was established in B.C., he became the first Indian Agent in the Kootenays. But perhaps his greatest fame derives from his record, of the first European use of the Crow's Nest Pass, which he discovered in 1873 - the only pass which was first traversed and opened west to east.

Phillips noted that he first visited the upper waters of the Elk in 1873, with John Collins. They were prospecting for gold, and to their great disgust, found nothing but coal. After reaching the "prairie" at the mouth of Michie's creek, Phillips and Collins decided to "work" this creek. After several days travel "through" timber, were surprised to find large trails that certainly were not elk trails, passing out toward Crow's Nest lake. They found the trees "covered with buffalo hair," and it was apparent that they had "passed through the Rock mountains without going over the range."

In 1874, Phillips, a Mr. Woods, William Saunders, and Jim Morrissey, "the real old miners," again prospected up the Elk Valley. They camped at Morrissey Creek, which they named after



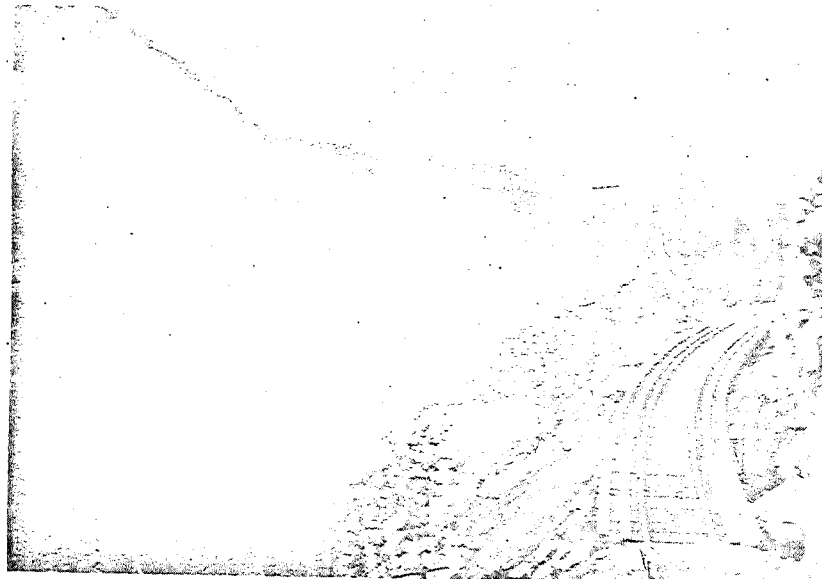
Michael Phillipps - discoverer of the Crows Nest Pass, 1873
This was the only Pass to be discovered west to east.

Jim Morrissey - and Philipps and Woods walked up this creek for some distance, "bringing out some of the coal." Breaking camp, they went up the Valley to "the next large creek" which they named Coal Creek. Philipps and Woods "went on foot" to the divide at the head of Coal Creek, and across to the "Michel Creek waters" where they found nothing but "coal and more coal everywhere." Back at their camp on the Elk Valley once again, they went over to the west side, and named Lizard Creek while exploring it, and crossed over the small local divide, above Island Lake to "the Bull River waters," where they found "iron ore and a better gold country."

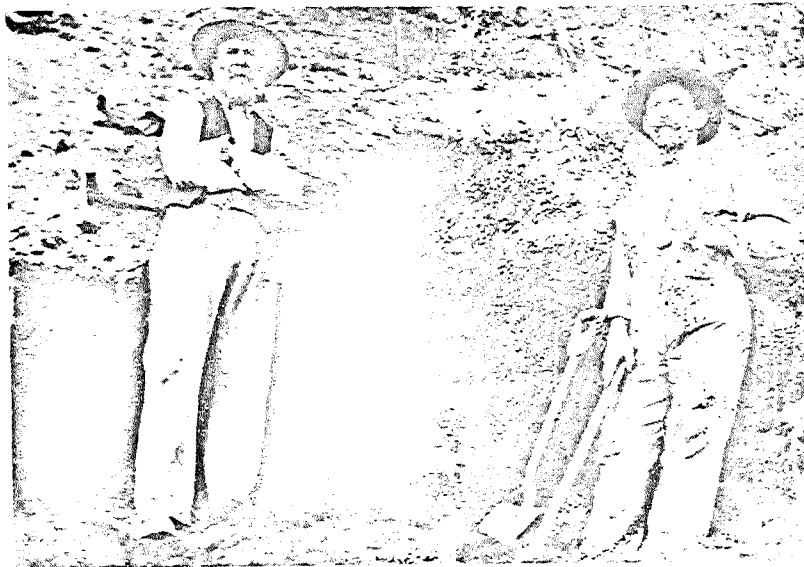
Philipps realized the importance of his discovery - or the "advantage of a pass through the great rocky range without a mountain to go over," and began working for a trail. William Fernie, who was at that time the Gold Commissioner for the Kootenays, apparently opposed this idea, and even after Mr. Galbraith, the incumbent MHA, got an appropriation to define the trail, Fernie showed some reticence about spending the money - or as Philipps quoted him saying, "the Indians say there is no pass, and there is no use spending the money to make a trail to nowhere."

Nonetheless, William Ridgway was eventually hired to help Philipps blaze the route - but it was William Fernie's brother, Peter, who finally completed the trail itself, with bridges across the Bull and Elk Rivers, in 1879.

William Fernie arrived at the Wild Horse Creek Gold Camp from the Cariboo in 1864 - and in 1865 worked as a foreman on the



The Crows Nest Pass looking west to east as it looked in 1898, and as traversed by M. Philipps 25 years earlier.



Wm. Fernie (from whom the town was named) was gold commissioner and one of the chief promoters in establishing a coal industry. Man on the right probably Phil Carosella.

eastward extension of the Deudney Trail, between Kootenay Lake and Wild Horse Creek. Father Leon Fouquette, OMI, established the St. Eugene Mission near Joseph's Prairie in 1874. He was relieved by Father Nicholas Coccola, OMI, in 1886 - which has also been stated as the year prior to Fernie's resignation as Gold Commissioner. But Coccola noted in his personal diary that:

"... the Indians built a fire and after the wood was reduced to ashes, still (it) continued to burn. After removing the ashes, they saw the black rock on fire. They took some of the rock to the mission and showed it to Mr. Fernie, the mail carrier from Bonners Ferry to Wild Horse Creek. Hiring the Indians, they took him to where the rock was and prospecting ... found that all the mountains carried coal."

This story, obviously entered in his diary several years after the "event," may have resulted from recollected bits-and-pieces of conversations, if not actual events. It also appears-unwittingly-to have provided the germ for the legend which grew around William Fernie's alleged romance with the Kootenay Princess - her necklace-of-coal - and the Elk Valley "curse" supposedly invoked by the girl's mother when Fernie had located the outcroppings, and lost all further use or interest for the girl.

This curse involved a fire, flood, and one other tragedy of which I am not sure of, as the ancient curse was lifted by the Indians after the first two tragedies had occurred.

..... "Among us kids at that time was a lot of resentment about the Indians. We blamed the "Curse." Every Sports Day the Indians would move in tepees, horses and everything and win all the races and go home."

On January 14th, 1887, William Fernie, Edward Bray, F.W. Ayler, and J.E. Humphries "made application to the B.C. Government, for a license to prospect coal over 1,920 acres of land in Kootenay District, starting at a point west of Marten Creek, about 60 chains north of the S.W. fork of said creek."

The Articles of Incorporation for the Crow's Nest Coal and Mineral Company were issued in 1889 - but rather than 1,920 acres of coal lands, the Government granted 2,409 acres on Marten Creek "to Edward Bray and others..." In 1890 this Company acquired an additional 7,800 acres of coal lands along Morrissey and Marten Ridges, and in 1893, all of these properties were in turn deeded to the British Columbia Coal, Petroleum and Mineral Company. The Kootenay Coal Company was organized in 1897, under Dominion Charter and during the same year became the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company Limited. This organization, in turn, received deeds to the lands in question, from the British Columbia Coal, Petroleum and Mineral Company.

With the formation of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company was the birth of Fernie, then called Coal Creek. It was situated near the site of the Old City tourist camp overlooking the Coal Creek stream.



Indians performing the ritual necessary to lift the ancient curse from the city of Fernie.



Mine office with staff, 1898.

immediately east of the C.P.R. tracks on the
brewery road. It was an ugly place with
two rows of shacks divided by a muddy lane.

By 1898 the old Town had outgrown
its boots, and the Board of Trade turned its
attention across the tracks to the present
main street area for a new townsite. Within
a short time new businesses, company offices
and miners cottages mushroomed in and
around the main street and as far as
West Fernie.

Some of the Ads. or comments were
printed in the Fernie Free Press Souvenir
Editions covering the years 1898 to 1905:

SHEPPARD & ELLIOTT "A complete stock of hardware
stoves, paints... plumbing fittings... Fair
Deal at a living Profit"

C.W. LAIDLEY "Thoroughly understands the
tailoring business."

THE FERNIE FREE PRESS "Product of G.G. Henderson with
brother R.L. Henderson on ... effects and printing
plant were dumped into two feet of snow. The
first home was a 12x12 rough board shack...
large tent was pitched on the building and
a stove set up and under its sheltering roof,
the first fine printing ... in Fernie."

I ALLEO "This store well stocked with men's
furnishings is the headquarters for the
Italian people."

THE FORT STEELE BREWING CO. "Lager Beer and Porter, made exclusively the best imported Bohemian malt and hops - aerated waters - unexcelled for their transparency and flavor."

J.D. QUAIL "I do a large business in carpenter's tools and I think it has come to me by supplying reliable goods. My stock of tinware and graniteware is complete - You will have no trouble if you buy your sash, doors, and shingles from me. Agents for Ulex sewing machines."

CROWS NEST TRADING CO. (referring to the mine disaster)
"Although the calendar year of 1902 now drawing to a close, with its many black vicissitudes, from which we all have suffered, but which have not allowed to interfere with our business."

P. Burns "Every town west of Macleod has a branch of this immense business... the meat comes through in carloads from the prairie."

THE VICTORIA HOTEL Mrs. S. Jennings, proprietress.
"The most home-like hotel in British Columbia."

THE HOTEL CENTRAL John L. Gates, proprietor.
"When visiting you are always welcome at the Central... all trains are met by a porter."

THE ROMA Built by P. Carosella and leased by Al. Rizzuto... "is a good dollar a day house."



Community planning "Old Town".



Lobby of the old Fernie Hotel on Victoria Ave.



Victoria Ave. prior to fire of 1904.

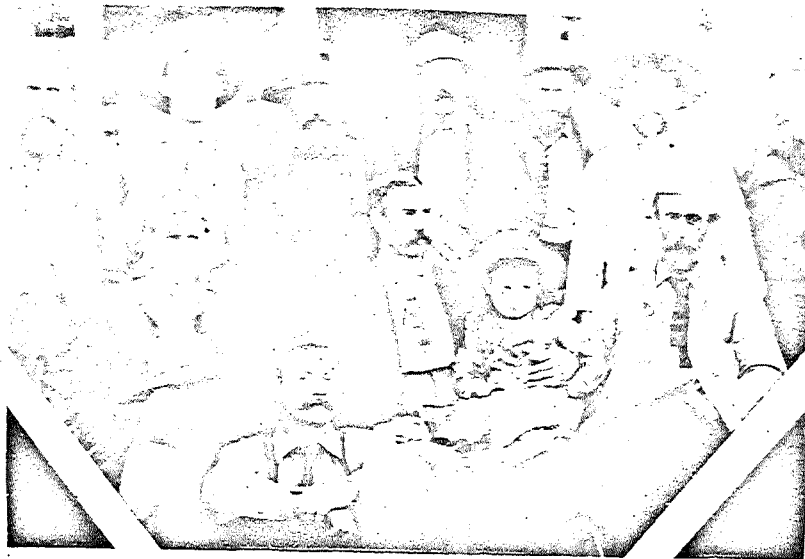
Most of the businesses first established were burned by the fire of 1904, which razed a section containing four business blocks down Victoria Avenue. In spite of this many involved were ready to do business again the following year.

The number of banks meanwhile flourished from the original two to a high of four and receded to the single enterprise now in operation. The collapse of the Home Bank in August, 1923, wiped out the life savings of the Corporation of the City of Fernie.

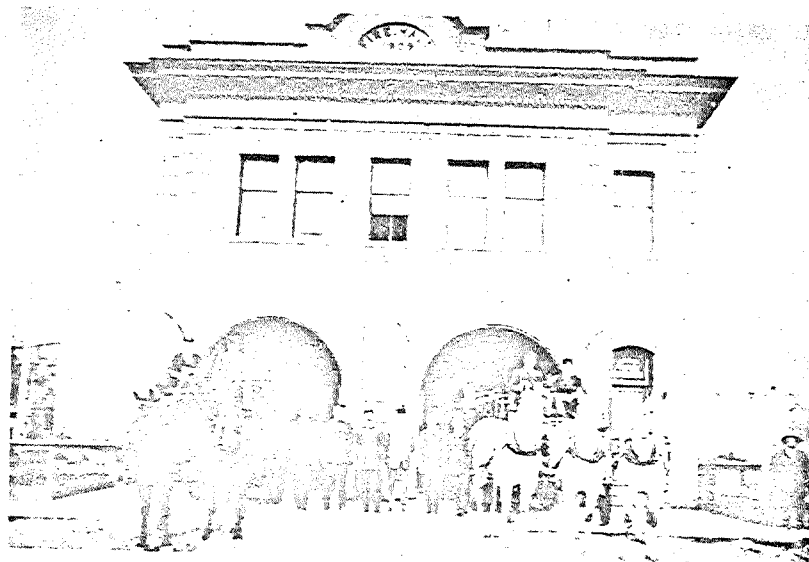
GREAT FIRE OF 1903

The fire started mildly enough with some unattended spot fires in the slashings of the Cedar Valley Lumber Co. near West Fernie. By 3 o'clock on that day, August 1, the blaze fanned by a stiff breeze had wiped out the Cedar Valley Mill, and racing through the dense woods reached the Elk Lumber Co. plant in West Fernie and the 6,000,000 feet of lumber piled in the yards. From that point, propelled by the intense draughts, red hot embers and flying planks, quickly rained down on the unfortunate city.

There were two lines of advance - one was to the Annex through heavily timbered Mt. Fernie, while the main destruction arose in the area beginning at the Fort Steele Brewery. The fire raced through the Old Town razing the timber east of the tracks and on into the new townsite, thus completely surrounding the entire city with a ring of destruction.



Some of the district's earliest white settlers (front l. to r.) F. Freeman, O. G. Dennis, F. P. Norbury, Hazel Galbraith and M. Phillipps. Wm. Fernie, C. M. Edwards, F. Pole, Capt. E. C. Parker, T. McVittie, J. E. Humphries, Wm. McCord.



Preparedness following the blaze.

With spreading fear and panic the inhabitants watched the rapid advance of flames. Mothers with their babies, confused children and fearful fathers, sought one another in chaotic confusion. It was a pandemonium with the sun being nearly obliterated by smoke and ashes, intense heat blistering the skin and fear crazed horses stampeding madly.

In spite of almost total disorder some people managed to "stay cool." Mayor Tuttle's first concern was the patients of the hospital and the isolation hospital then called the "pest house." They were first taken to the concrete Western Canada Wholesale house and when driven from this refuge by the advancing flames they were again removed by willing hands and faithful nurses to the safer area of the tracks where about midnight a train took them to Cranbrook.

ACCOUNT BY SARAH STEWART

We were all wakened up at 10 o'clock in the morning. The fire was on both sides of the Coal Creek Valley. There was a knock on the door and we got out as fast as we could. Then I came down on the train with my brother and some friends of mine and I never seen my home or my father or my mother or my sister for 6 weeks after - didn't know if they were dead or alive. Well, we were wandering around the streets and a friend of ours came up and said "What's the matter Sally?" and said we had no place to stay. So he said, "You can come and stay with me."

Messages of sympathy came quickly and in large numbers. The first to help were the people of Cranbrook who opened wide their doors. Places and individuals extending from Victoria, B.C., to St. Leonard, N.B., and in the U.S.A., sent their condolences together with generous donations of cash.

1909 "Souvenir Edition" quoting English newspapers version of the fire.

The unstinted measure of human kindness extended out to the homeless of Fernie by Cranbrook, forms a chapter so beautiful and so memorable that it cannot be forgotten as long as the heart of man is stirred by human kindness.

In fact every centre within reach was thrown open, Coal Creek, Elko, Morrissey, Baynes, all welcoming with commendable Christian spirit, as many as their homes warranted. At Cedar Valley scores were also cared for.

The promptness and cheerfulness with which the insurance companies recognized the policies of sufferers was indeed one of the features that made a rapid rebuilding a thing to be considered. The newly organized Globe Insurance Company, which afterward came into such notoriety, being the only company to fail in any way to redeem its policies. To the Globe Company the Fernie Fire was indeed an irretrievable death blow.

The accounts in some of the old country papers, were amusing in the extreme and showed either a poor source of telegraphic information, or a sad lack of knowledge of this country's geography.

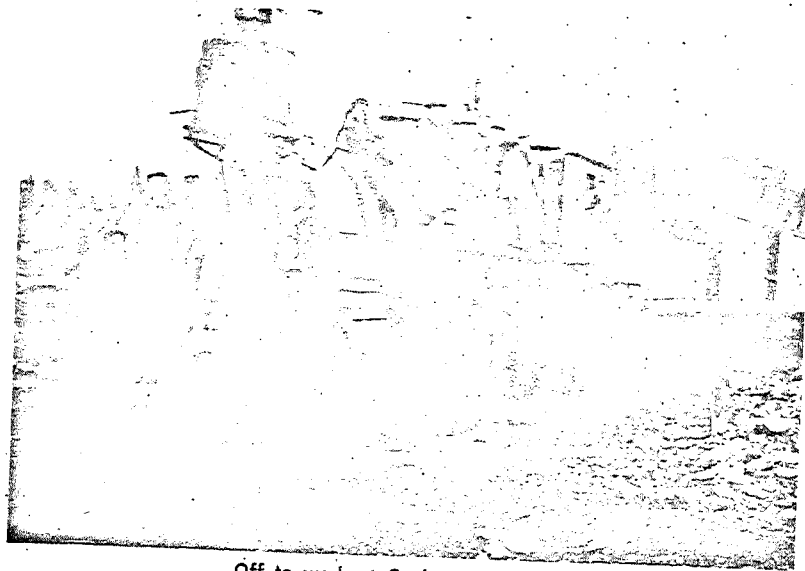
For instance - THE LIVERPOOL WEEKLY POST.

"Fernie, a prosperous town of 6000 inhabitants, in the southeast corner of Vancouver, has been destroyed by a fire. The fire originated 100 miles north of the National Park, near Banff, a forest long dry from drought."

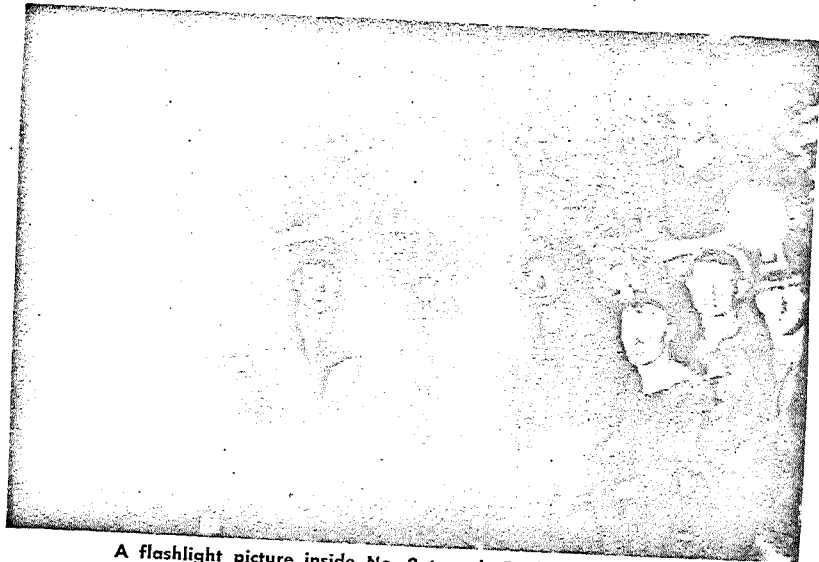
From the CHRISTIAN HERALD, an old country publication. Apparently, it conveyed to the mind of the publisher a vivid likeness of the conditions of life in this neck of the woods:

"One of the most impressive features of the great fire was the stampede of animals from out of the mountain fastnesses. These have been in every case the precursors of the fire, and in many instances warned people of the immense danger before it was otherwise known. The terrorized animals crowded the gullies and the prairie, where safety might be found, regardless of the presence of human beings."

During the days that followed the disaster, relief was rushed into the stricken city with both CPR and G.N. supplying free



Off to work at Coal Creek - 1898.



A flashlight picture inside No. 2 tunnel, Coal Creek, 1898.



Entrance to No. 2 tunnel, 1898.

service tents were erected on the Coal Co. grounds and from here food, clothing and shelter were provided. Even business men re-opened in these surroundings, with W.F. Murhead supplying boots and shoes, quickly to be followed by the Trites Wood with general merchandise, while the Bank of Hamilton re-opened its vault.

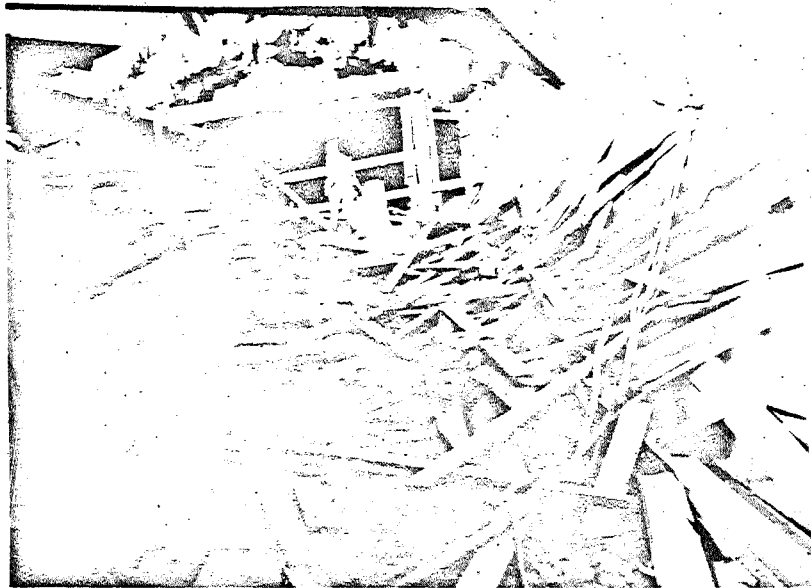
Permits were granted to erect frame buildings on condition they were replaced after 6 months by buildings of stone, brick, or concrete. These are mainly the buildings, which arising from the ashes of the second fire in 4 years, are the structures we see today.

MINE DISASTERS

The tragedies of the era did not stop at the fire of 1904 or 1908. The date of May 22, 1902 is regarded as one of the grimmest in the mining annals of Canada. About 7 o'clock in the evening a tremendous blast shook the entire Coal Creek Area. By the time the reason was discovered it was found that 128 men had been killed.

Equally tragic were some of the catastrophes that followed:

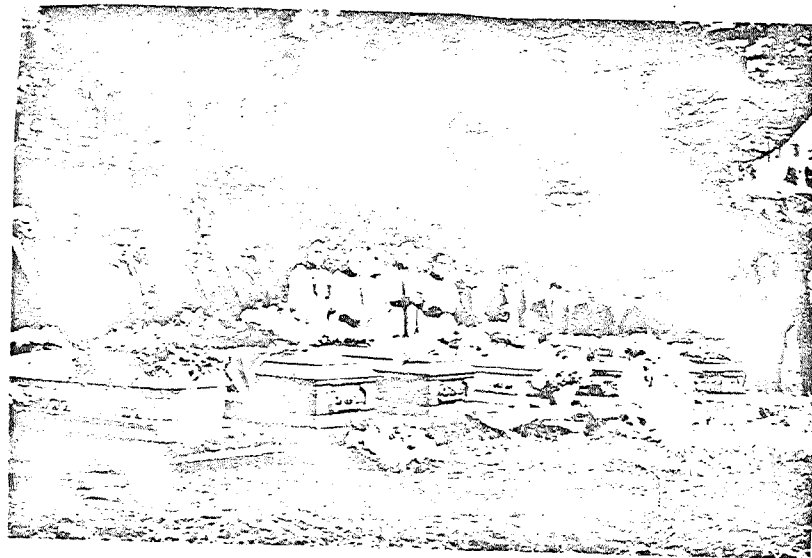
May 22, 1902	Explosion	Coal Creek	128 dead
Oct. 14, 1903	Outburst	Morrissey	4 dead
Nov. 18, 1904	Outburst	Morrissey	14 dead
Jan. 8, 1904	Explosion	Michel	7 dead
Aug. 8, 1916	Explosion	Michel	12 dead
Apr. 5, 1917	Explosion	Coal Creek	34 dead
Aug. 30, 1923	Explosion	Coal Creek	10 injured (burns)



Effects of the blast at the mine entrance.



Rescue operations following the blast.



Services for some of the victims at the Elk Valley Cemetery.

Apr. 13, 1929	Blowout	Coal Creek	2 dead
Sept. 20, 1938	Bump	Coal Creek	3 dead
July 5, 1938	Explosion	Michel	3 dead
Apr. 3, 1967	Explosion	Natal	15 dead } 10 injured }

SIDNEY HUTCHESON:

"There were numerous explosions on the coal mines and someone was killed each time. Sometimes as high as 50 men lost their lives. I remember one time in 1916 or 1917 a large no. of men were killed and the undertaking parlor was on an alley one-half block from school. The bodies were badly burned and anyone could go into the parlor to look. They were laid on blankets at the back of the parlor. Everyday a group of us checked after school and the only ones that were identified were the ones that had rings on their fingers. The first thing I purchased when I started work was a ring and I still wear one.

With the history of so many deaths, I went to talk to Dr. McKrue of Fernie who is just retiring this year. He began his medical profession at the age of 27 in 1939. When asked why he came to Fernie he said because it was in the middle of the Depression, openings were scarce, and Fernie had a vacancy. The facilities included a 2 storey building, 25 beds and no elevator. Stretcher cases were carried up the stairs.

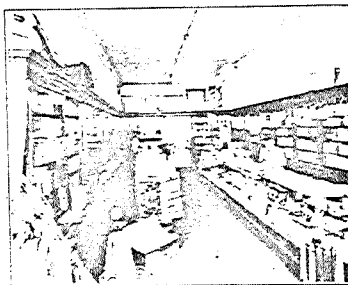
During this time the population was between 2000-2500. Coal Creek was



Drs. S. Bonnell and D. Corsan, Fernie's first medicos arrive in 1898.

THE FIRST DRUGGIST *Doing Business in S. E. Kootenay*

Reliability Beyond Question
Fifty Years in the Drug Business



Headquarters For Quality
In The Drug Business in Fernie

The Old and Reliable Druggist

A. W. BLEASDELL, Fernie, B. C.

going full steam and the railway was taking three shifts of miners to work from Fernie to Coal Creek, everyday.

Offices were upstairs and hours were 11:00 to 12:30 noon and 2:00 to 6:00 evening - calls anytime after that. There were three doctors all together. Wages averaged \$200 to \$300 a month.

Many of the cases were industrial accidents: machinery, explosions, lacerations, amputations, etc. An example was Raymond Buchan. Apparently he was riding a boxcar, fell off, and lost his leg under the wheels. He is 33 now. One man named "Frenehie" fractured every bone in his body working in the mine. As soon as he was able he went back.

Coal Creek is an extremely dangerous mine. It was not unusual for gas deposits to build up and explode. Men would sometimes be caught in these and their bodies would get peppered with bits of coal (looked like big black heads). It was there for life.

When I first began working in the drugstore I thought that Fernie's male population consisted mainly of faggots, as men would come into the store looking as if they had spent two hours in front of the mirror with an eyeliner and mascara. I was quickly informed that it was really a result of working in the mines - the coal dust eventually ground right in and was impossible to get off without wearing off.

M.S.A. did not come into effect until 1943 or 1944 but until then medical contracts were available. For \$1.80 per month per family.

all medical expenses were covered
There were two maternity homes which were private residences. These had delivery rooms and if any complications arose, the women were taken to hospital.

ACCOUNT BY SARAH STEWART:

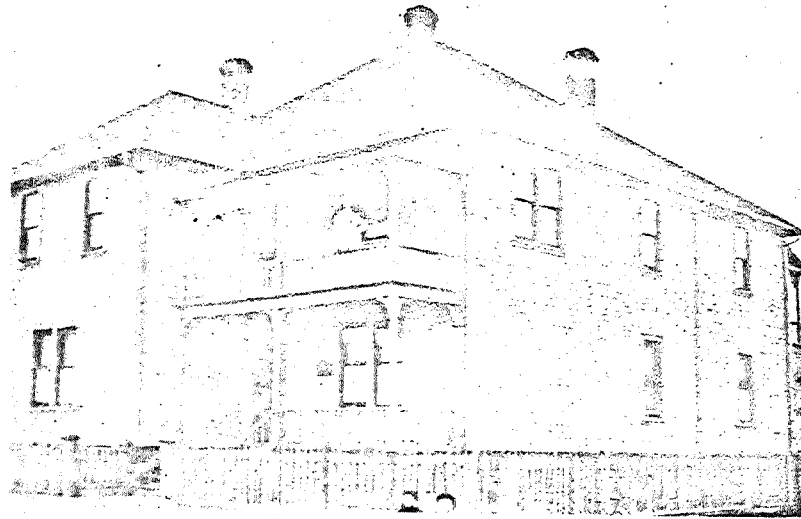
There was a friend of mine we used to call him "Dusty," and his mother was a midwife in Coal Creek. Now if anyone had a baby you either got her or the Doctor. He (the doctor) had a horse called 'Flossy' and all he'd have to say was "Okay, I have to go to Mrs. Ferguson's," and Flossy would take him up from our home and stop - and that old horse knew exactly where he was!

We were fortunate to have such a wonderful doctor and what he couldn't do we used to come down to Fernie to see Dr. Kelsey Sr. or Mr. Kelsey Jr. Their practice was eventually taken over by Dr. George Larson (who is still practicing in Fernie).

In 1948 the present hospital was built and a new hospital is now under construction.

Mr. McKutchie's wife (a nurse) told me how at one time she was getting blood for transfusions and Coal Creek men turned out to donate blood. Mary asked one man "Are you one of the 'donors'?" and he replied "No, I'm a Simpson!" After that he would never look her straight in the eye.

This coming June Dr. and Mrs. McKutchie



The Fernie Hospital, 1902.



Coal Creek, about 1920.

will be leaving Fernie to retire in Vancouver. I asked them why they weren't retiring in Fernie and Dr. McKittrick replied that people would never let him forget he'd been their doctor and he'd always feel compelled to practice medicine. He was just getting too tired.

SIDNEY HUTCHESON:

"Summer complaint ran rampant among the children every summer and at that time was sure death, so when school started again quite a few playmates would be missing."
"During the flu epidemic in 1918 they closed the schools so everyone was sick among grownups large groups of us boys were running loose in town and at times we were delivering hot chicken soup to sick families. Later on we were organized into work groups by Dr. Garner's wife, Mrs. Garner, who was a nurse. She died from flu and exhaustion that fall. All the hotels were turned into hospitals and I was allotted to the King's Hotel. I stayed there with some other boys, ate in the dining room and we cleaned the kitchen and halls and took our turns trying to keep the blankets on the sick people who all had a very high temperature and died very quickly. I believe around 200 died in Fernie that fall and a list of the dead was posted each day. I remember Tony Bossia, who made props for the Coal Company, had his name on the list and put an ad in the Fernie Free Press to tell all his friends that he was still very much alive."

THE CROW'S NEST COAL COMPANY

With the formation of the Company in 1897 the fortunes of the city of Fernie, were for the greater part directly related to the amount of coal and coke produced by the company. Operations commenced in 1897 and by 1903, 6 mines had been opened and developed. Work began at Michel in 1898 while in Morrissey and Carbonado five mines were in production by 1902. Coke was produced in beehive ovens at all three centres by 1903. However in 1903, a series of blowouts began to occur at Morrissey. By this time there were 148 coke ovens with 92 almost completed, but because of a series of blowouts, poor coking coal and excessively fine coal, the mines began to work only intermittently and finally shut down in 1909, after a production of 486,626 tons of coal and 13,072 tons of coke.

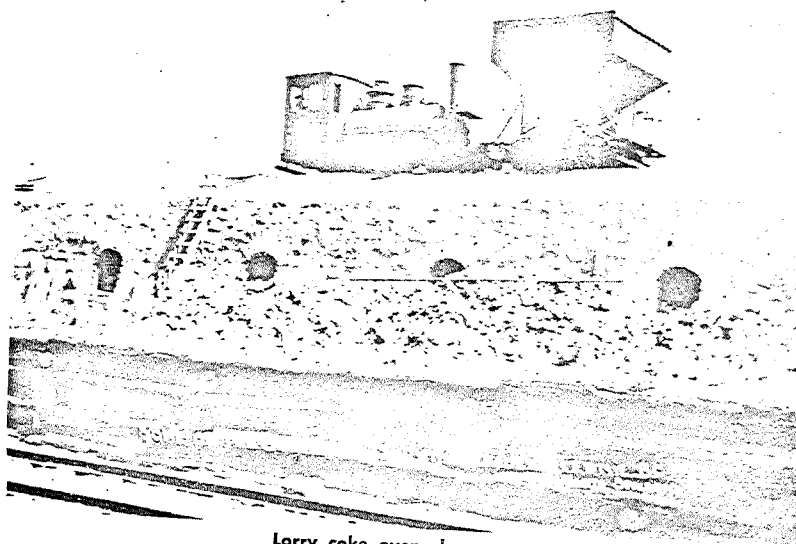
Operations at Coal Creek had begun with 20 miners from Cape Breton, while in 1900, W. R. Wilson, took his first duties as general manager. Quickly following the production of coal were the erection of beehive ovens at Fernie which by 1903, numbered 412. But by 1932 with the declining markets more easily supplied by Michel, the Fernie ovens were deemed expendable, and except for a brief re-opening in 1937, were closed permanently.

Meanwhile, because of lessening demands, the production of coal at Coal Creek, spurred only temporarily by World War II, gradually diminished. The mines were closed in 1955 after a production of 19,806,000 tons of coal and a new \$1,500,000 all steel tipple was dismantled.

Michel colliery, presently the only one in



Initial operations in 1898 used some electrically operated equipment.



Lorry coke oven charger.



Old tipple at Coal Creek, large white building was the barn.

production, has been the largest producer with a total production of over 30,000,000 tons a day.

There the old behave ovens were gradually replaced with "by-product" ovens commencing in 1939 and completed in 1952. In recent years the Japanese market has absorbed the greater part of coal production. Negotiations leading to a long-term contract with Japan requiring several million tons of coal annually resulted in Kaiser Coal Company (from California) and a new surge in Fernie's growth.

The Company's Forest Products Division had a total of five sawmills at the turn of the century. Lumber operations now account for some 44% of the Total Company Sales. Several logging and mill operations in the East Kootenay have been acquired so that it is now possible for the company to consider a large new mill, a plywood plant and a pulp mill - wheep-eee!!!

Other company interests include the "Crow's Nest Pass Electric Light & Power Co. Ltd.," and the "Crow's Nest Pass Oil & Gas Co. Ltd."

In April 1965, the name of the company was changed to the Crow's Nest Industries Ltd., adopting at the same time a new corporate symbol.

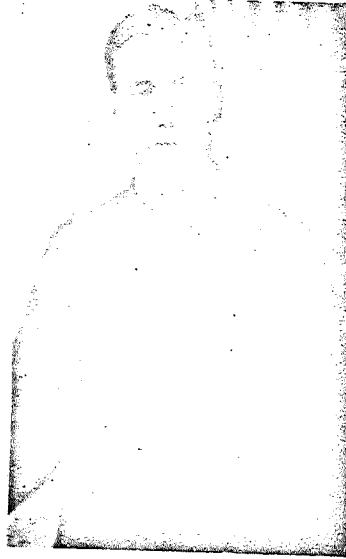
THE SOCIAL ADVANCEMENTS

Along with the hardships and industrial strife, there did exist a certain amount of "social enlightenment" in the early days.

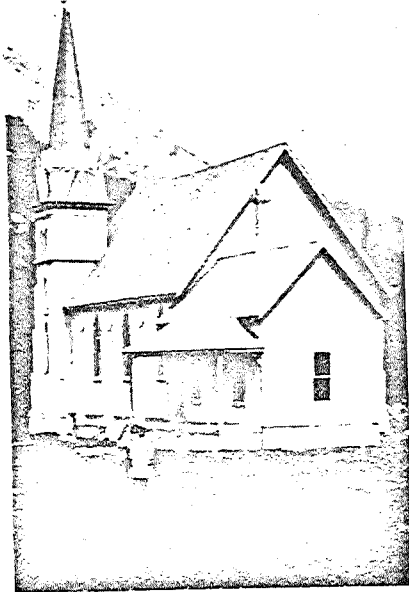
From a collection of log huts in 1895, Fernie, in seven years, attained the status of a city, with mayor, Fred Stork, and six aldermen. In the spring of 1899 Fernie had 2 hotels, a flourishing bootlegging establishment and 100 school-age children. By March of that year a school board had been elected and on April 2, a Catholic school opened.

"The first duty of the teacher was to notify the parents of how she wanted the students dressed and cleaned up. The Coal Company had brought out hundreds of families from all over Europe and cleanliness was quite a problem. A note was sent home to the parents about haircuts, dressing, bathing, etc., and the parents, not understanding English, burned the note so the teacher would give the haircuts, wash heads in coal oil and show everyone how to clean fingernails and toenails. (No shoes worn in that school). With the aid of the strap everyone co-operated. I remember one boy. The teacher had shaved his hair off and she asked him what the rings were on the top of his head. He said "That's where the old man hits me with the dogchain. It's the only place he can hurt me." This boy served in the Second World War and came back with medals and a high place in the Canadian Army."

March 14, 1899, resulted in Fernie Board of trade consisting of 25 men.



Famed Kootenay missionary,
Rev. N. Father Coccola, O.M.I.



Roman Catholic Church, 1898. Built on
site of present B.C. Telephone office.



The church was built by Rev. Father
Welch, O.M.I.

1893 - Presbyterian members held their first public worship in a general store run by Johnson and Bricker. That same year construction for a church began.

SYDNEY HUTCHESON:

"I went to two Sunday Schools for a couple of years. The Methodist Church in the morning and the Salvation Army in the afternoon. This way I went to two picnics every year and also got two presents at Christmas. I can still remember one of the teachers and they sure had patience."

1897 - Lumber for Catholic Church brought in from the coast.

Wooden sidewalks were installed on several streets as early as 1900.

1903 - Miners joined the United Mine Workers of America. First strike called Sept. 22, 1906 and lasted almost two months. Longest was called in 1911, involving 6,000 men at Coal Creek and Michel. It lasted eight months and the men went back to work for less money than they had been getting before.

A year after the 1908 fire the city boasted a brick factory, 8 wholesale houses, a macaroni factory employing 10 persons, a brewery with 3,000,000 gallons annual capacity, 4 chartered banks, 10 miles of sewer, 20 miles of street and sidewalks, a \$5,000 school, \$20,000 city hall, \$15,000 firehall, 50,000 power station, 8 policemen, 5 churches, 11 hotels with 40 rooms each, \$25,000 hospital, post office with 6 mails daily, an American Consulate, \$25,000 skating rink,

a 30-member city band, bowling green with 40 members, 6 baseball league teams, 2 football teams, Fernie Commercial Club, and the Working men's Club.

"The highlight of each week was Saturday The Orpheum Theatre matinee. Every kid in town who has been on his best behavior all week received a nickel or dime to see the continued serial. Targan Eddie Polo, The Hooded Terror, were some of the serials. Everyone was checked for peasheeters and sling shots. When the villain was on the screen peas and rocks hit the screen by the hundreds. The noise was terrific and sometimes the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Johnston, would turn the lights on in the middle of the show, walk up and down the aisles, telling everyone to keep quiet or be thrown out. The serial always ended with the hero or heroine hanging on the end of a cliff or something and the next week when the show started the couple would probably be sitting in some fancy restaurant, but no one ever questioned it."

There is a story that: "Billy Wilmet and Bill Hamilton, prospecting in the Bull River area found ground so full of gold only the goldenrod would grow." Wilmet reportedly shot a badger on McDougall's Mountain and found the animal's teeth filled with gold, and subsequently spent much more time looking for the appropriate badger hole.

Four of the more adventurous young men about town brought in motorcycles and a weekend trip (return) to Elko on the C.P.R. cost \$54.

In spite of the 'culture' there was still the primitive aspect around - shown by a Fernie Free Press report that a Creston

Indian who had forged the agents name "As a cheque was turned over to his tribe for punishment. This was accomplished by tying the man up with haywire and leaving him without food for several days.

Justice was a bit rough at times. The January 1912 edition of the Free Press tells how the police removed six men from the carcass "Five being found fit, were put to work on the streets, but the sixth, being crippled and of no use, was ordered to leave town."

The 1912 Council had water problems and voted money to build a high board fence "to keep the goats from swimming in the reservoir."

Automobile speed limit of 8 m.p.h. was posted for the 44 licensed vehicles.

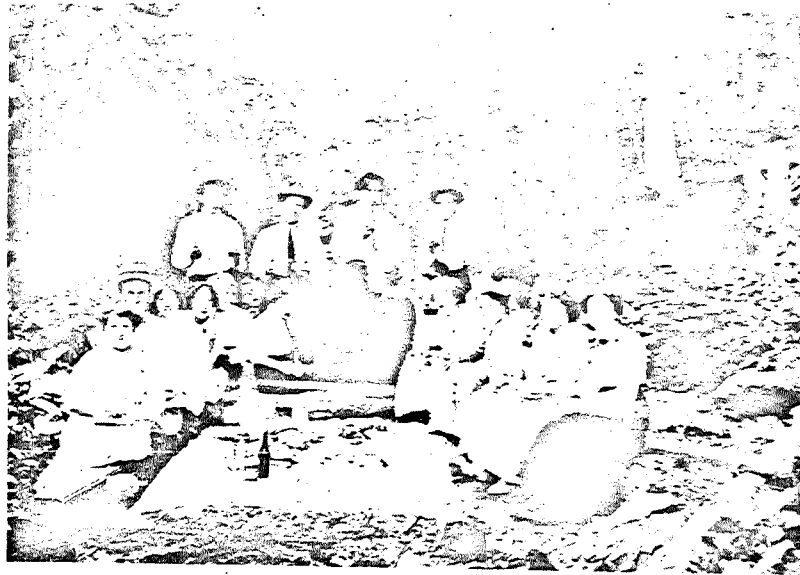
Province passed an "Anti-idlers Law," providing a fine of \$100 for every man who did not have a job. A weeks grace was allowed.

May 31- Black Day as it was then announced that Coal Creek Mines would close due to a lack of coal markets. The U.S. imposed a 75 cent per ton duty on coal. However, mines were partially re-opened July 3 for an order.

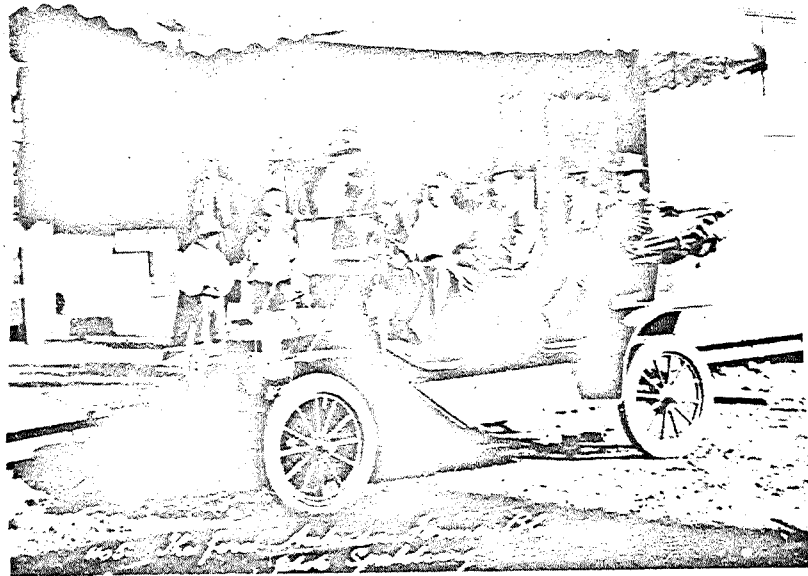
Relief camps established at Crow's Nest for unemployed men, given a few days work on the roads each month.

Parades of the unemployed were commonplace, as were "prairie schooners," filled with farmers leaving Alberta and Saskatchewan in search of some other way of life.

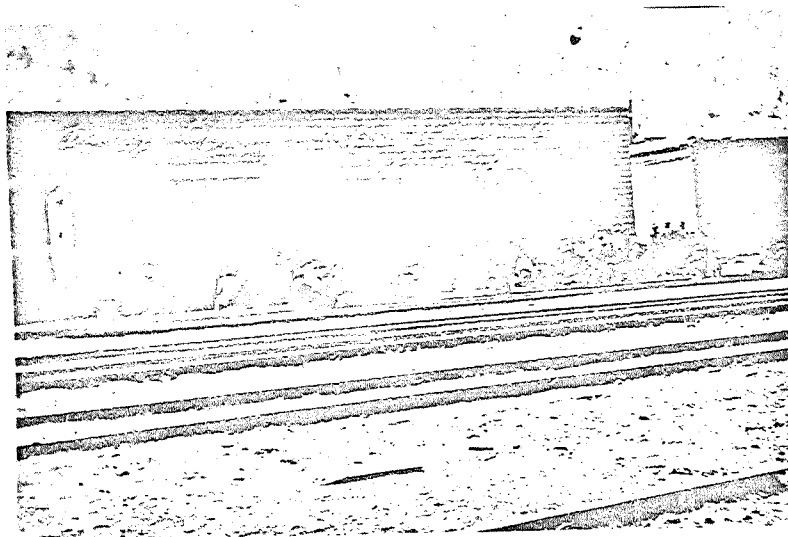
All areas of the district contributed men and women for the forces and demand for miners could not be filled. Consequently,



"Beaus and Belles" picnicing near Fernie.



The first auto in 1910 with J. Letcher at the wheel.



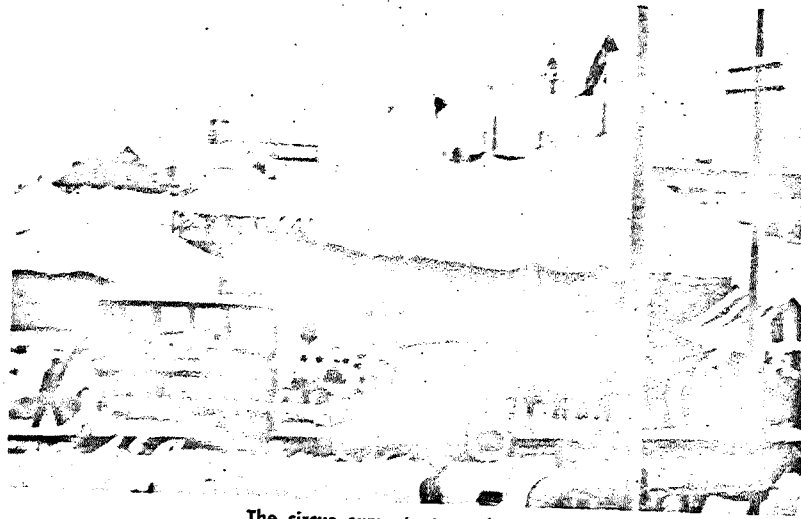
Strike bound miners wait for rations, probably 1911.

a number of men were returned from overseas to work the mines and bush camps.

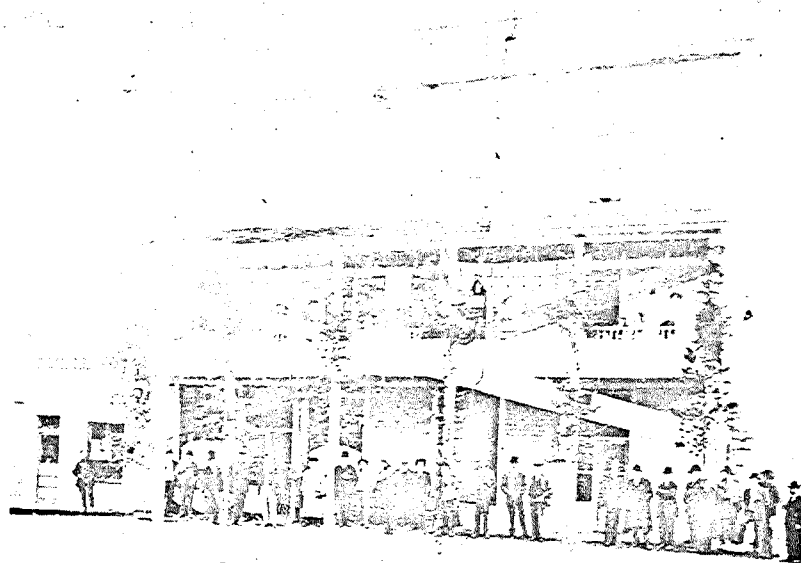
SYDNEY HUTCHESON:

"During World War I we all gathered bottles, sacks and brass. We sold the brass to a plumbing shop in town for the war effort but I don't think we were paid the full price for it. Taps, bearings, G-N and loci engine throttle lever handles, bells, were all "found" and sold."

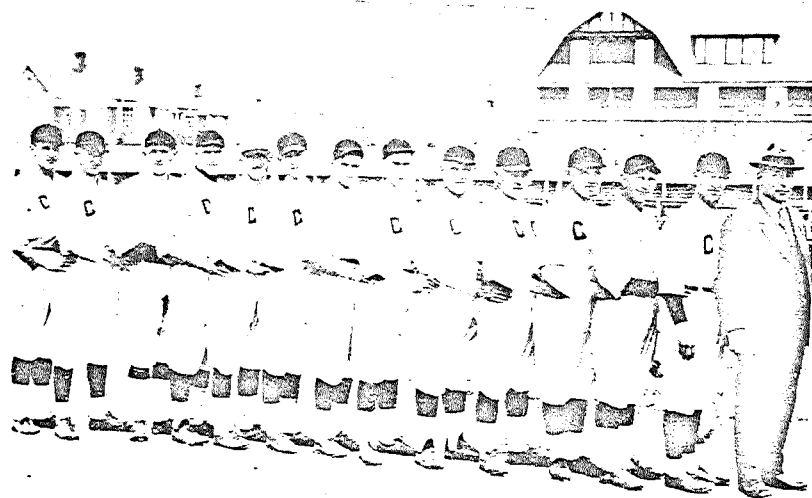
"Coal Creek, Michel and Fernie all had football teams and when Coal Creek was playing no one ever missed that game. If the "Creek" didn't win the game they always won the fight and the real battles were the women."



The circus came to town in 1911.



One of Hosmer's hotels in festive array.



Coal Co. ball team, 1925 Western Finalists at Calgary.
 Left to right: L. Blair, S. Ault, H. Barger, J. Shand, C. Steinert, F. Ellison, Z. Sikora, R. Colton, L. Rushcall, B. Wilson, G. McTeer, J. Hovan, H. Bishop and A. Klauer, manager.

SARAH STEWART

Could you tell me a few things you did for excitement as children in Coal Creek?

Excitement! Should I tell her what we did. (yelling to husband) Well, for one thing, we never did ---- the kids nowadays never play games like we used to play. We used to play kuits the can, we used to play peggy down at the stations where they had wagons and we used to make little kuits just like little houses out of them and go in there and we'd sit and talk and talk and talk. On gatenight - ah - we used to be terrible kids! We went and waited for our teacher to go in the outhouse and we wined up the door, rolled it all the way down to the Coal Creek School playground and hoisted it right up on the Coal Creek Flag pole. But we used to have lots of good times. We would go to the Coal Creek dance and dance until 5 or 6 in the ^{times} morning, go home and get your skates and go skating til mabe 7, and from 7 til mabe 10 or 11 go have a sleep and come back and do the same thing all over again. And then Mr. Jeffery's was our teacher and we'd have one special day of clearing up the yard - each class - there were three classes. The class to the right was the big class, the class in the middle was the bigger group, and the class that I was in was was the - um - ah - close to six. And then I went from the room on the left to the room in the middle and that's where



Slab House of 1903 period.



Turn of the century kitchen in Coal Creek.

I was when I had to quit because my mother took double pneumonia when I was only 15 and I wrote my exams and at that time would have been coming down to Fernie Highschool because that was first year high, and I never had the chance.

Did they have any Theatres?

No - they wh - up in Coal Creek we had our own. Jeff suggested "what do you say we put on a concert?" Fine. And Mrs. Eddy Conklin and Mrs. Jack Kofield would get together and would all plan and they'd get the whatever it was they wanted and we'd all take parts and had a wonderful time.

We used to have Coal Creek track meets on the Coal Creek Football field. We would have big banquets and the lady's auxiliary, better known as the "Gasey Gobs", used to all donate the food, dishes; tablecloths. We had Connie Benesh who always made the tea and coffee for never mind what dance it was, but there was one night every week for ladies where we used to play wist or bridge. Up in Coal Creek it was one big happy family. If they didn't see you for one day then they were right there to see if there was something wrong. And if I come to see you and you weren't home or you come to see me, all the stuff would be on the table - the cookies and cake and whatever you wanted because up in Coal Creek we NEVER locked our doors. If you come to my house you helped yourself and if I come to your house I helped myself. And that's the way we used to



Ladies Golf club about 1923.

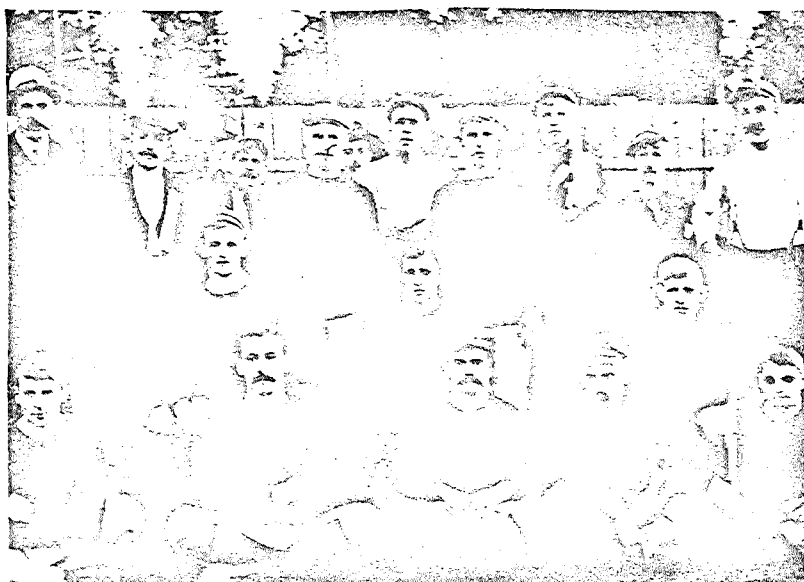
Front row, left to right: Mrs. A. Liphardt, Mrs. G. Moffatt, Mrs. N. Moses, Mrs. M. Connick.

Kneeling: Mrs. A. Lawes, Mrs. S. Wilson.

Standing: not known, Mrs. G. Kelman, Mrs. G. Owen, Mrs. J. Gates, not known, Miss A. Black, Mrs. J. Corbett



The Lacrosse team of 1900.



The Fernie football team of 1905 - 1906.

do it in Coal Creek. And we made all our own fun, and we made all our own - uh - what would you say, well - like our own hockey, our own lacrosse, basketball, our own entertainment. We had a concert and that's the first time I seen my hubby. He came in with Mrs. Tanya Hesketh and they both danced and I said to somebody "Whose that young fella?" And they said he's not long out from Scotland - his name is Tommy Stewart and there he is (pointing to her husband sitting watching T.V. in the living room)

- How long have you been married?

38 years on the 28th of March

- So you've lived here 38 years?

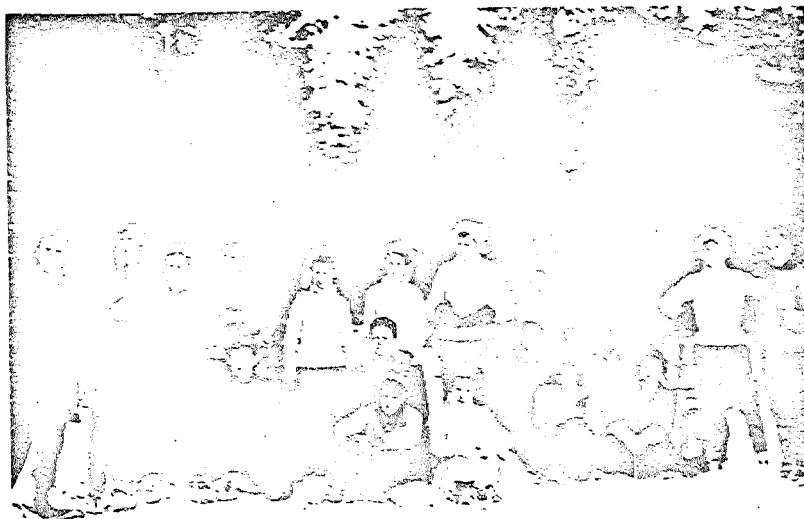
31 years, but I lived down in Fernie almost 4 years before Tom and I got married because I worked $3\frac{1}{2}$, almost 4 years and I went with him $3\frac{1}{2}$ years before we were married.

- So you knew him pretty well eh?

When I seen him I said that's the boy for me! and - that's the boy I got!!



Swimming races in the pool at Coal Creek about 1926.



The Snowshoe club, 1909.

MARTIN BARR - AGE 70

My dad was a coalminer - Me and my wife came to Fernie 14 years ago. I was born in Pennsylvania. Dad came into Michele in 1902. Mother and I, we were on our way to Michele and if the Frank slide wouldn't have come down we would have landed in Michele on my birthday, April 25, 1903, so my mother thinks that the train was somewhere around Pincher Creek or there, ah, where they got word that the Frank slide came down. At that time they didn't have no turntables - I guess they got one now. Do you know what I mean by turntables?

If an engine was going say West and something or another happened and it had to go back East; well in them days they had steam engines and they'd hook a hose up to this here turntable and then 3 or 4 men would get out and there's long handles on this here turntable and they just get the engine on that and turn it around and face it the other direction you see, but at that time they didn't have any turntables so the train backed up all the way to Lethbridge and then they brought us back into Michele around the Spokane way.

My Dad was a coalminer around 1900 or so and took a homestead up the Elk Valley North of Natal and that's where we were raised.

When I worked in the mines around Michele I also fired boilers, shod horses that was the last work that I done. At that time the Coal Company had 155 head of horses working in the mines in the bush.

How DID THEY USE THE HORSES IN THE MINES?

There were two kinds they had what they called tail chain horses and they had shaft horses. A tail chain horse was a horse that had a special kind of harness on and sort of a butt stick we used to call it. A butt stick, down below his tail and then there was a chain hooked on this butt stick and the other end onto the car. And they used those kind of horses where it wasn't necessary to hold back the cars. If the cart got going too fast the driver would get off and put a few sprags in the wheels and that would hold the cars back.

But in other places, where the miners worked up in the face they had drivers with shaft horses (I've got a pair in the backyard now, brought out of coal creek for historical reasons) On a shaft horse, the shafts go right around the horse, then there was a steel gooseneck came down from the shaft and over to the car. And the horse could pull with this and also hold the car back going down grade. This way the driver didn't have to put any sprags in the wheels to slow em down.

Anyway, there was two of us shoeing horses then, working in the shop. And like I say, there was 185 head of horses and every horse had his shoes changed at least once a month. I did what they call the floor work; that is, take the old shoes off and nailing on the new ones, and my partner - he made the shoes. Anyway, I shod 8 horses everyday in a eight hour shift, and besides that I used to go over to the

barn and when the horses would come off of morning shift, well I'd check them as they were going into the barn. If any had a string shoe or a loose shoe or lost a shoe I'd mark which horse it was and take them over to the shop and fix them up so as they were ready for the next shift.

Before this, when I got to be 20 years old I left and I went up into Lesser Alberta. It's 80 miles south of Edson. There's one of the Coal Companies that put in a new road there from Hinton Alberta and they're strip mining there now. It had been a ghost town for years until recently this extra market came into being and they turned to strip mining. I worked there from 1925 in and outside of the mines and then in 1925 - there was three of us went down into the Northwest Territories, down onto the Arctic Circle and we trapped there in 1925 & 1926, then came back and that's when I went to shoeing horses.

After that we got married in 1928 and bought a farm and about 20 horses and started guiding. Everything on credit of course. So in 1929 this slump came along and just caught us right up to here. We managed to rough it through and get out from under it and guided for 39 straight years. We then sold out, sold the ranch and everything and moved down to Fernie. But then I was only out of it for one year and I bought another guiding outfit up in the Bull River and ran that for a few years. Then I got to be too old and turned the thing over to my son. He's still operating it. I now have 8 vintage cars and they keep me busy.



Main street of "Old Town", 1898, then known as "Coal Creek".

Dawn White
ARTS I
APRIL 5, 1973